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PINDAR, *O.*, VIII, 53 ff.

BY CHARLES E. WHITMORE

The eighth Olympian ode contains a peculiarly obstinate passage, not yet satisfactorily explained: I mean that beginning at line 53, and forming a transition from the myth to the closing portion. Many scholars have declined to analyze it, on the ground that the peculiar abruptness in which the difficulty lies is sufficiently accounted for by assuming that the ode was hastily written to be sung at Olympia immediately after the victory. This assumption, initiated by Boeckh, has remained the orthodox view, championed by Christ, who regards the chief stumbling-block, line 53, as an inept piece of filling, and perpetuated of late by Sir John Sandys¹ and by Fraccaroli in his revised translation.² Elements for framing a correcter view have been in print for over twenty years; it is therefore worth while, by reviving and slightly extending them, to seek an interpretation which shall yield a coherent and intelligible train of thought.

Even if we grant that the ode was sung at Olympia, it is hard to see how the brief interval between the gaining of the victory and its celebration the same night could have sufficed for the composition of so long a piece and its preparation by a chorus. It is conceivable that an ambitious family, confident of the success of its member contending in the games, might proclaim that confidence by commissioning an ode in advance; but in that case it is undeniable that the poet might have received notice long enough ahead to allow him leisure for the task. Furthermore, the possibility of subsequent revision, which would remove blemishes distasteful alike to a conscientious poet and to patrons disposed to demand his best work, cannot be excluded. On either showing, the need for haste disappears. But was the ode really sung at Olympia? Drachmann's careful study³ has shown that we have no knowledge of any occasion on which an ode so extensive as the one under discussion could fittingly have been performed there. Its form, with four full

¹ *Pindar* (Loeb Classical Library), p. 82.

² *Pindaro, Le odi e i frammenti* (Milan, 1914), I, p. 309.

³ *Moderne Pindarfortolkning*, pp. 167 ff., especially pp. 174-6.

triads, is wholly unlike that of such short pieces (*P.*, VI, for instance) as we may with some degree of plausibility conjecture to have been sung at a feast on the evening of the victory. Its character suggests performance, if not in public, at least at a general gathering of the victor's clan; but an entire clan would scarcely assemble at Olympia for such a purpose when it could do so far more conveniently at home. Indeed, the only evidence for Olympia in the ode itself is the opening address to the sanctuary; but this, with its emphasis on the method of the oracle, would perhaps be more appropriate at a distance than on the spot. Moreover, the explicit phrases *τάνδ' ἀλιερκέα χώραν* (25) and *δεῦρο* (51) can refer only to Aegina; and since the ode must have been sung at one place or the other, it is reasonable to take these definite phrases at their face value, and to regard the opening invocation as addressed figuratively, especially since it blends the actual Olympia with its personification. Finally, the allusions to the victory seem to put it in the past, and are not such as would lead us to think of it as having been won only a few hours before.

If, then, the weight of evidence is against the supposition that the ode was sung at Olympia, the hypothesis of hasty composition is no more in point here than in the case of any other Pindaric ode, and we must accordingly see whether a train of thought can be discerned in the context which will explain the alleged careless ineptitude. Our starting-point is the recognition of the fact that the ode, though not written in haste, was composed under rather trying circumstances. As Mr. W. R. Paton has pointed out (*Classical Review*, IV, p. 318), Alcimedon, for whom the ode was written, had by his Olympic victory thrown into the shade the achievements of his elder brother Timosthenes at Nemea, and thereby aroused the latter's jealousy. Pindar seems to have been asked to say something in the ode which should mollify Timosthenes, a commission which he executes in lines 16 ff. Moreover, the poet felt himself, for reasons unknown to us, obliged to praise Alcimedon's trainer, Melesias, an Athenian, before a hostile Aeginetan audience. Both these necessities have a bearing on the passage under discussion.

In lines 56 ff. we have a reference to two victories won by a person not named. It has often been supposed that they were won by Melesias, and that the mention of them constituted the arousing

of the envy that Pindar deprecates. In view of the fact that Melesias was an Athenian, and that the ode was written only four years before the conquest of Aegina by Athens, it is conceivable that any mention of him might have roused hostility. What further reasons for such hostility, as well as for Pindar's regarding the mention of Melesias as necessary, may have existed, we do not know. But if we follow Fritzsche (*Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie*, 1882, p. 145) in regarding these victories as won by Timosthenes under the training of Melesias, we can explain the allusions in a much simpler way. The victories of Timosthenes are mentioned in order to mollify him, though the mention is of course not made too explicit in an ode written primarily for another; while the fact that Timosthenes too is a pupil of Melesias makes the naming of the latter still more likely to rouse the envy that Pindar deprecates, but that he is determined to disregard. The *κῦδος ἐξ ἀγνεύων* (54) is thus the glory that Melesias reaps from his success as a trainer, a success shown by the fact that Alcimedon's victory is the thirtieth that has been won by his pupils.

Fritzsche's interpretation of *τερπνὸν δ' ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσον ἔσσεται οὐδέν* is less satisfactory. He rightly says that it must be a link between what precedes and what follows; but the only meaning he can find in it is the idea that a victor and a vanquished do not derive equal pleasure from the victory. So flat a notion can neither contribute to the train of thought nor facilitate the transition from the myth to the mention of Melesias. I therefore venture to suggest a new view, which will, I think, avoid these defects.

The preceding myth has dealt with Aeacus, so beloved of the gods that he was chosen as their helper when the walls of Troy were built, and, on the completion of the work, brought home by Poseidon in his own chariot. This was surely an exceptional honor for a mortal; often, when the gods took a mortal into their company, he remained there. When, in *O.*, I, Pindar describes the carrying up to heaven of Pelops, who was returned to earth later, he adds an allusion to Ganymedes, who remained with them, as if to indicate the normal course in such matters. Aeacus, then, was favored beyond the common lot of mortals; but his good fortune could not be lasting, and Pindar adds the general observation, "Nothing among men remains equally (that is, uniformly) joyful." From this generality he passes to a more personal utterance:

"But if I have traversed ⁴ in song the glory that Melesias has won through his pupils, let not envy smite me with a jagged stone"; that is to say, let not my pleasure on the present occasion be imperilled by my praise of Melesias, which I will continue by mentioning victories won by yet another of his pupils, Timosthenes.⁵

On this view the harshness which the ordinary interpretations find in this passage is removed. Pindar modulates, as it were, from the felicity of Aeacus through the generality that joy cannot be unvarying for mortals to his own deprecation of hostile criticism. The generality is thus rather more closely associated with what follows than with what precedes, and it accordingly becomes a question whether we should not, in line 53, read *γε* instead of *δέ* on the analogy of such a passage as *O. XII, 5*. In any case, the period which our texts have at the end of the line should be replaced by a colon, to mark the continuity of thought with the ensuing lines. We thus obtain an interpretation of the passage which yields a coherent train of thought; and the transition in line 53, though abrupt, cannot fairly be called inartistic.

Let me, in conclusion, suggest a slight emendation in another part of the ode. Line 47 reads in the manuscripts *Ξάνθον ἤπειγεν καὶ Ἀμαζόννας εὐίππους καὶ ἐς Ἴστρον ἐλαύνων*. Why Xanthus should be coupled with the Amazons is not clear, and the sentence is stringy. But if we read *κατ'* *Ἀμαζόννας*, according to a frequent Pindaric construction, we have a parallel clause to *ἐς Ἴστρον*, and a smooth sentence. Apollo hastens to the neighboring Xanthus, and from there drives among the Amazons and to the Ister.

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⁴ May not the specific *ἀνέδραμον*, instead of being, as Professor Gildersleeve thinks, "the objection of the cavillers dramatically put in the past," be a reference to the mention of Melesias in *N.*, iv, which probably preceded this ode, perhaps at no long interval? Various coincidences of phrase could be pointed out which suggest that the two odes do not belong far apart.

⁵ This, as Mr. Paton suggests, gives another reason for the opening invocation of Olympia, which is asked to accept this poem, though it also commemorates victories won elsewhere, to wit at Nemea, for *πολλὰ ὁδοὶ σὺν θεοῖς εὐπράγας* (13-14).